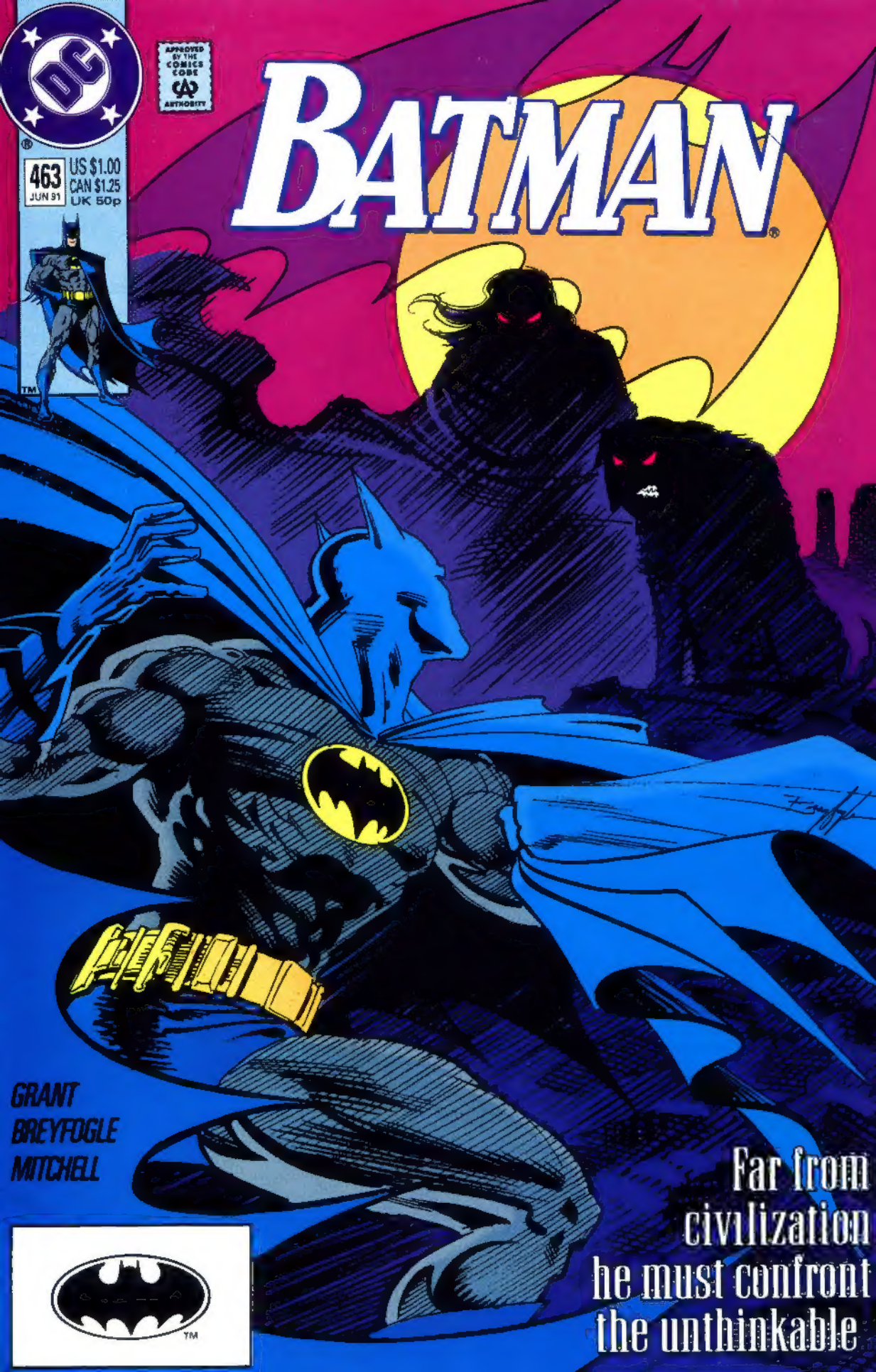
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BATMAN
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JUN 91
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TM
GRANT
BREYFOGLE
MITCHELL
Far from civilization he must confront the unthinkable
TM

SPIRIT OF THE BEAST
PART TWO
"THIS IS THE WAY INDIANS DO THINGS. IT'S MEANT TO BE, IT HAPPENS, AND THAT'S IT."
--Rolling Thunder, Native American Medicine Man.
GHOST

ALAN GRANT Script
NORM BREYFOGLE Penciller
STEVE MITCHELL Inker
ADRIENNE ROY Colorist
TODD KLEIN Letterer
KELLEY PUCKETT Asst. Editor
DENNIS O'NEIL Editor
BOB KANE Batman Creator

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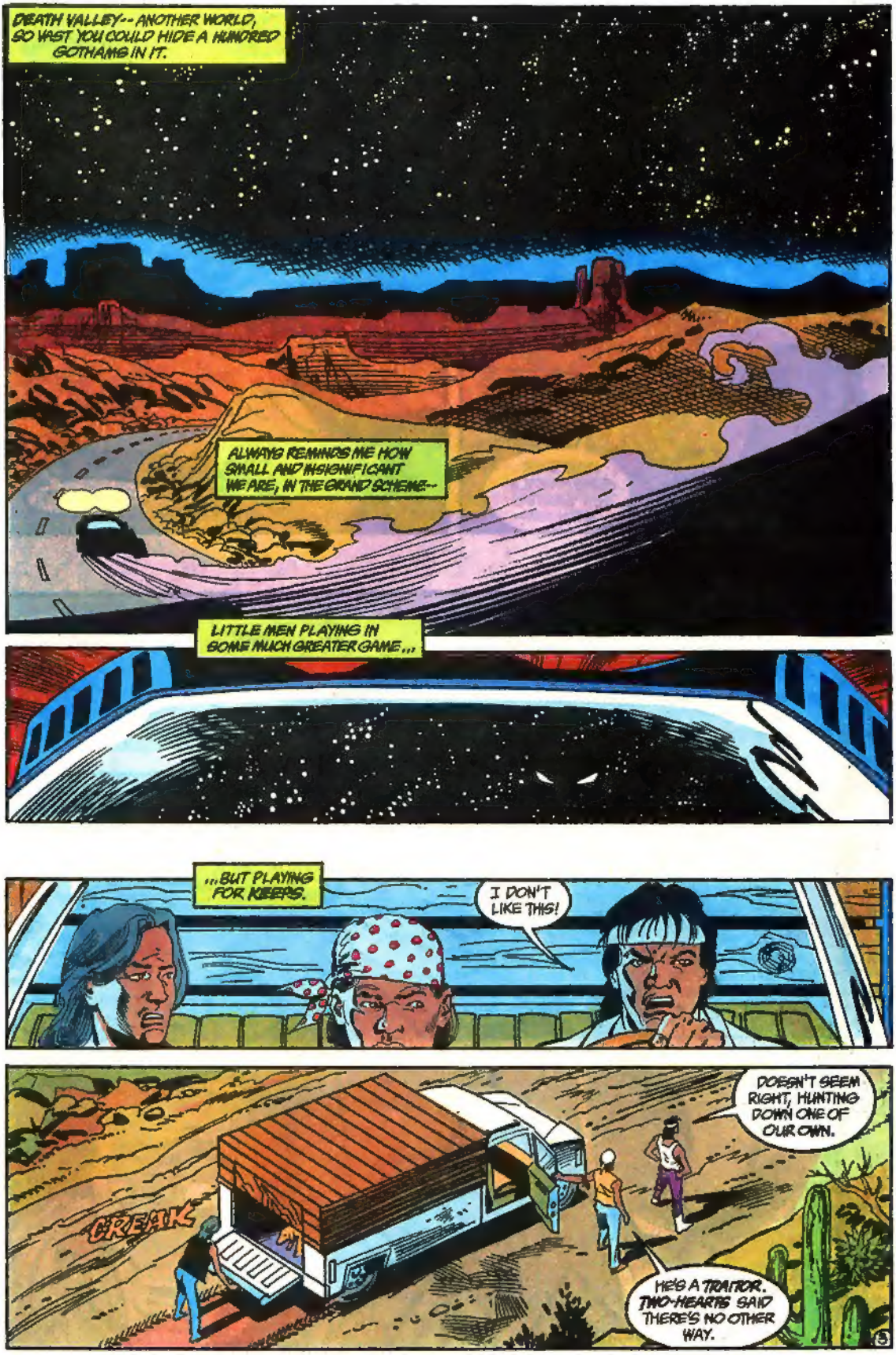
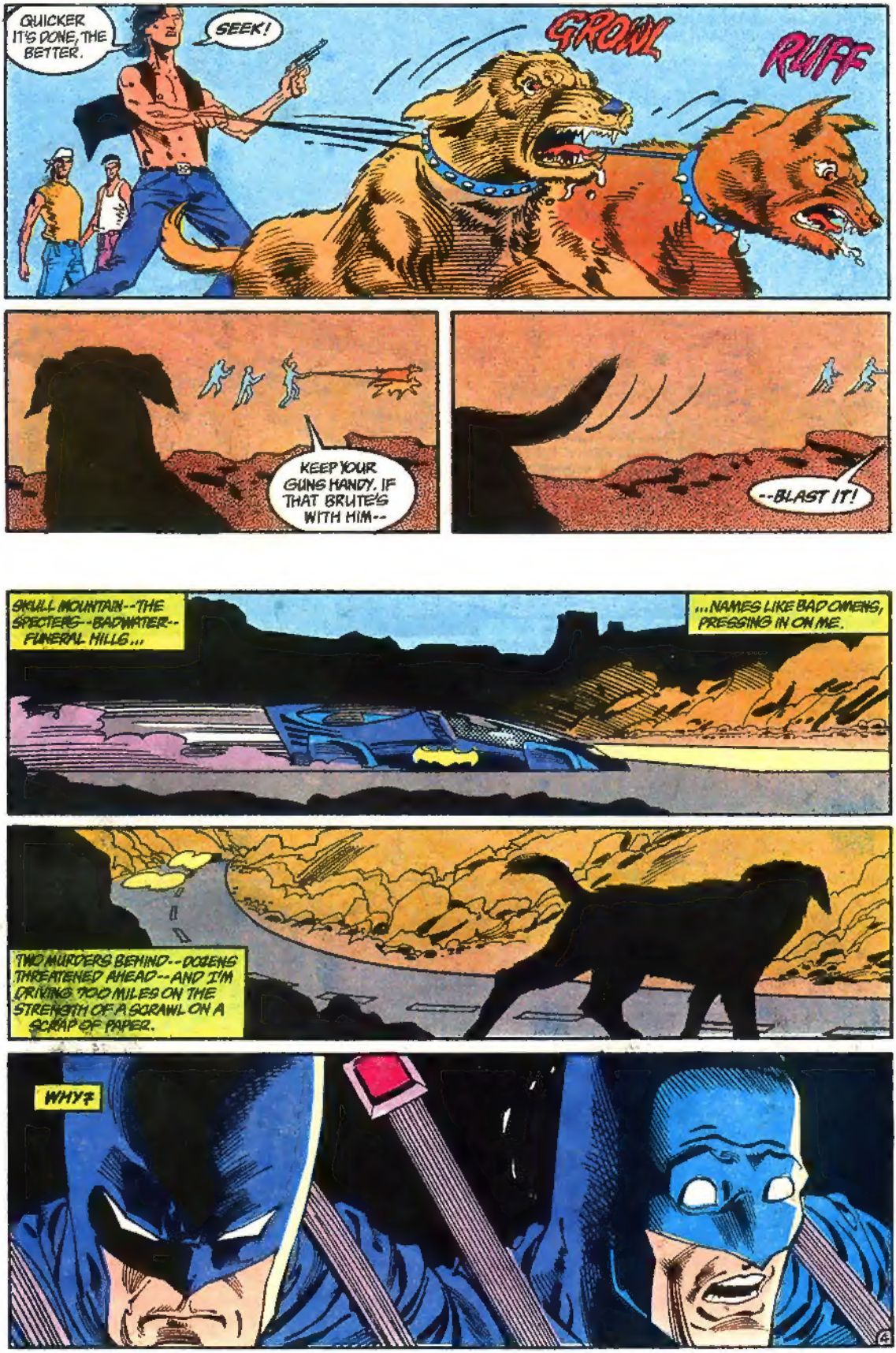
G-6418

TIME STANDS STILL WHEN YOU'RE TRAVELLING.
WHATEVER'S BEHIND YOU IS GONE--YOUR DESTINATION STILL AHEAD--BOTH OUT OF YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.
YOU TRAVEL IN LIMBO.
MODESTO NEXT RIGHT
WHY THIS ROAD?, I WONDER AS I HIT YOSEMITE. WOULD HAVE BEEN FASTER TO TAKE 5 SOUTH, THEN HEAD EAST THROUGH BARSTOW.
YOSEMITE STATE PARK
JUST A WHIM, I TELL MYSELF. A TRAVELLER WITH TIME TO SPARE.
DEATH VALLEY SCENIC VIEW
BUT I CAN'T HELP FEELING THERE'S SOMETHING MORE...
2

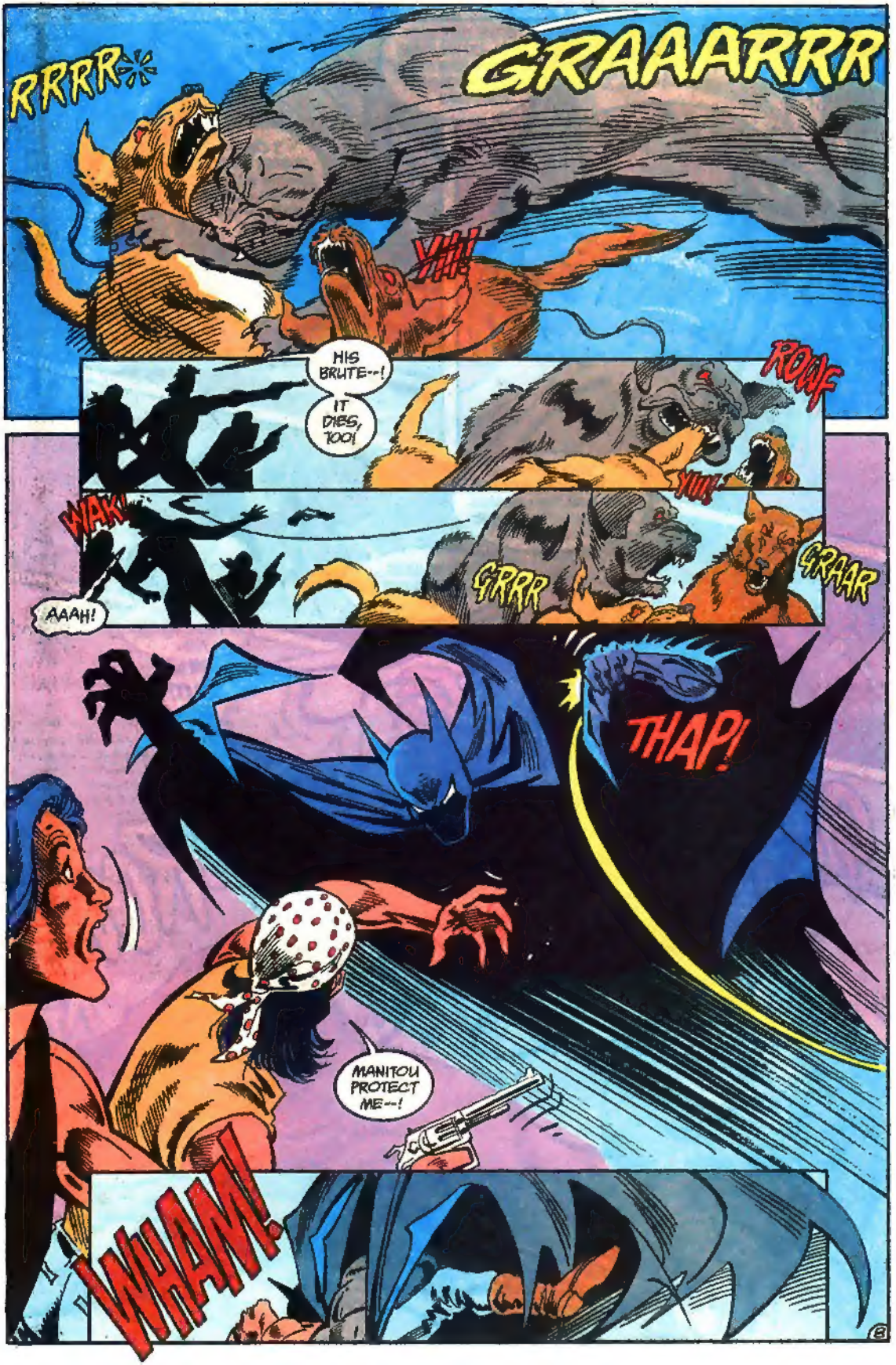

DEATH VALLEY-- ANOTHER WORLD, SO VAST YOU COULD HIDE A HUNDRED GOTHAMS IN IT.
ALWAYS REMINDS ME HOW SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT WE ARE, IN THE GRAND SCHEME--
LITTLE MEN PLAYING IN SOME MUCH GREATER GAME...
...BUT PLAYING FOR KEEPS.
I DON'T LIKE THIS!
DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT, HUNTING DOWN ONE OF OUR OWN.
CREAK
HE'S A TRAITOR. TWO-HEARTS SAID THERE'S NO OTHER WAY.

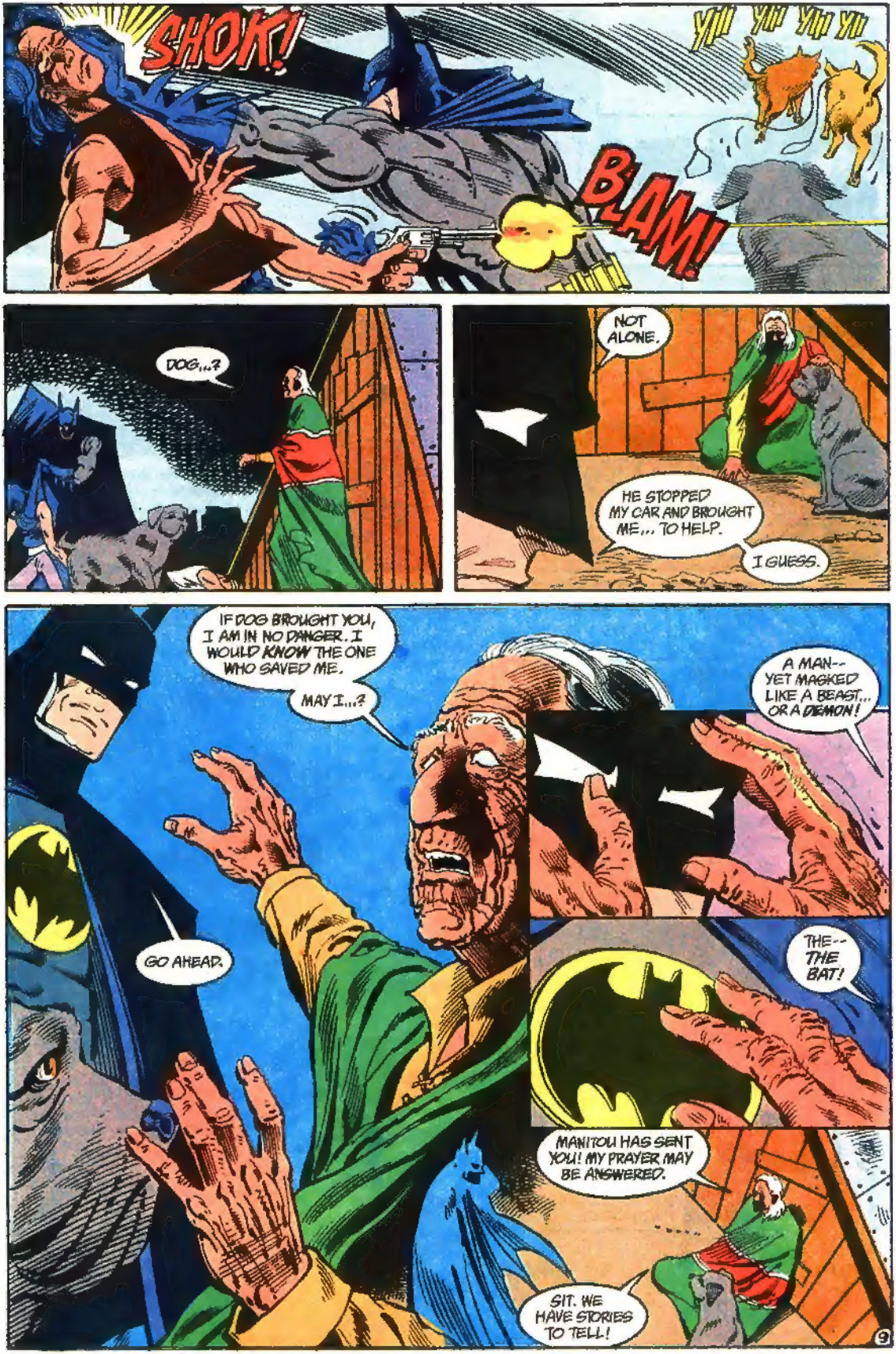

QUICKER IT'S DONE, THE BETTER.
SEEK!
GROWL
RUFF
KEEP YOUR GUNS HANDY. IF THAT BRUTE'S WITH HIM--
--BLAST IT!
SKULL MOUNTAIN--THE SPECTERS--BADWATER--FUNERAL HILLS...
...NAMES LIKE BAD OMENS, PRESSING IN ON ME.
TWO MURDERS BEHIND--DOZENS THREATENED AHEAD--AND I'M DRIVING 700 MILES ON THE STRENGTH OF A SCRAWL ON A SCRAP OF PAPER.
WHY?

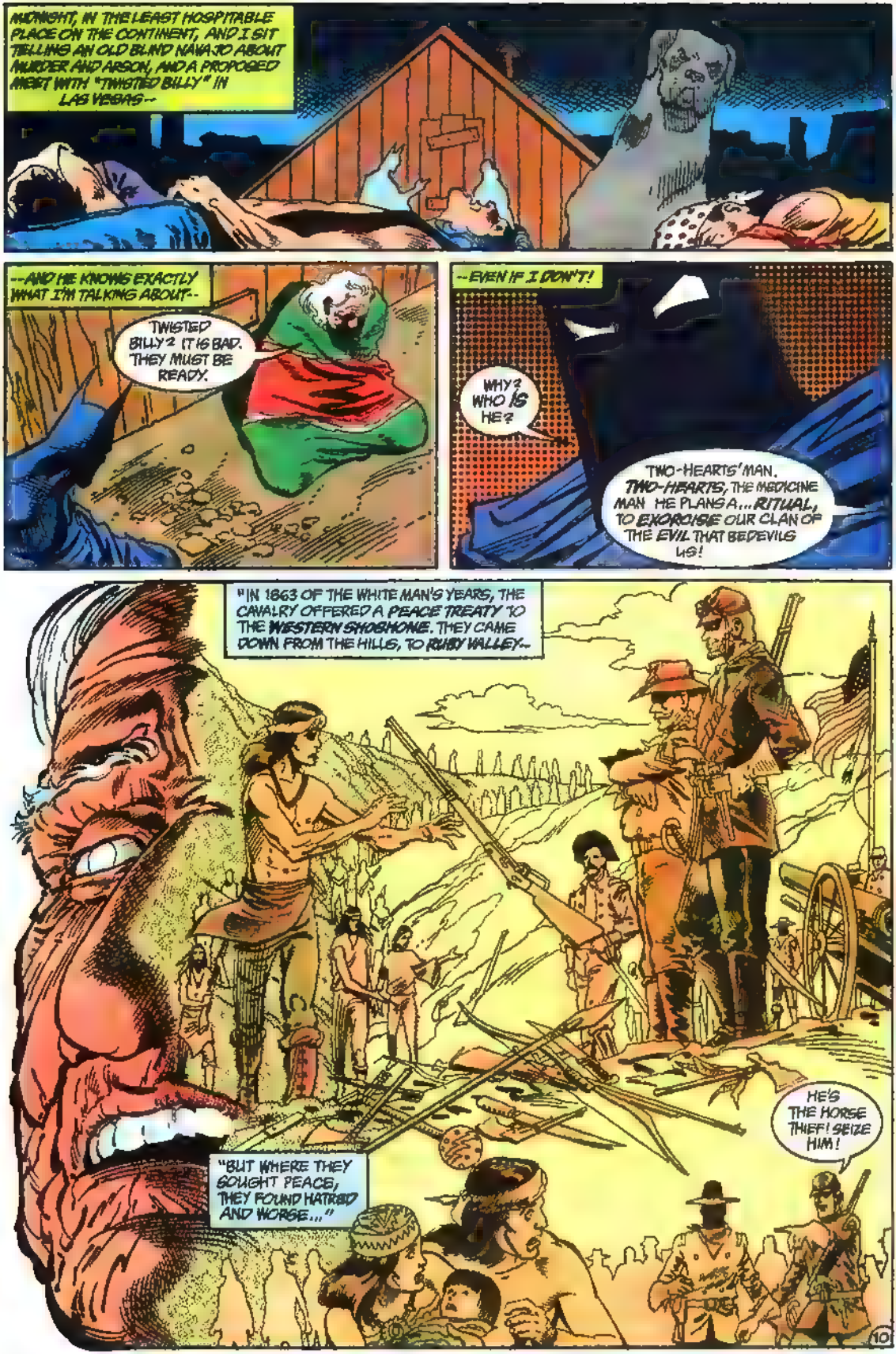
SKREEEECH!
GRR
GRR

IT WANTS ME TO FOLLOW IT!
AND I DO.
CRAZY!
BLACK WOLF!
MANITOU-- HEAR ME!
ALL MY LIFE I TURNED MY BACK ON YOU, GREAT SPIRIT. AT THE END OF MY DAYS, I ASK NOT THAT YOU EXTEND MY MISERY--

COME OUT, OLD MAN--OR WE SEAL YOU IN! YOUR GHOST WILL STAY TRAPPED FOREVER!
I ONLY REGRET THAT MY DEATH WILL NOT CANCEL OUT THE EVIL OF MY LIFE.
YOU HAVE BETRAYED YOUR PEOPLE, OLD MAN. TWO-HEARTS PRONOUNCES THE ULTIMATE PENALTY!
TWO-HEARTS... IS MORE BLIND THAN I AM!
BUT THE BLAME IS MINE.
MY PLACE IN HELL AWAITS ME.
DO IT!
GRRK
RRRR
ROWRRRK


RRRR
GRAAARRR
YIII!
HIS BRUTE--!
IT DIES, TOO!
ROWF
YUK!
WAK!
AAAH!
GRRR
GRAAR
THAP!
MANITOU PROTECT ME--!
WHAM!

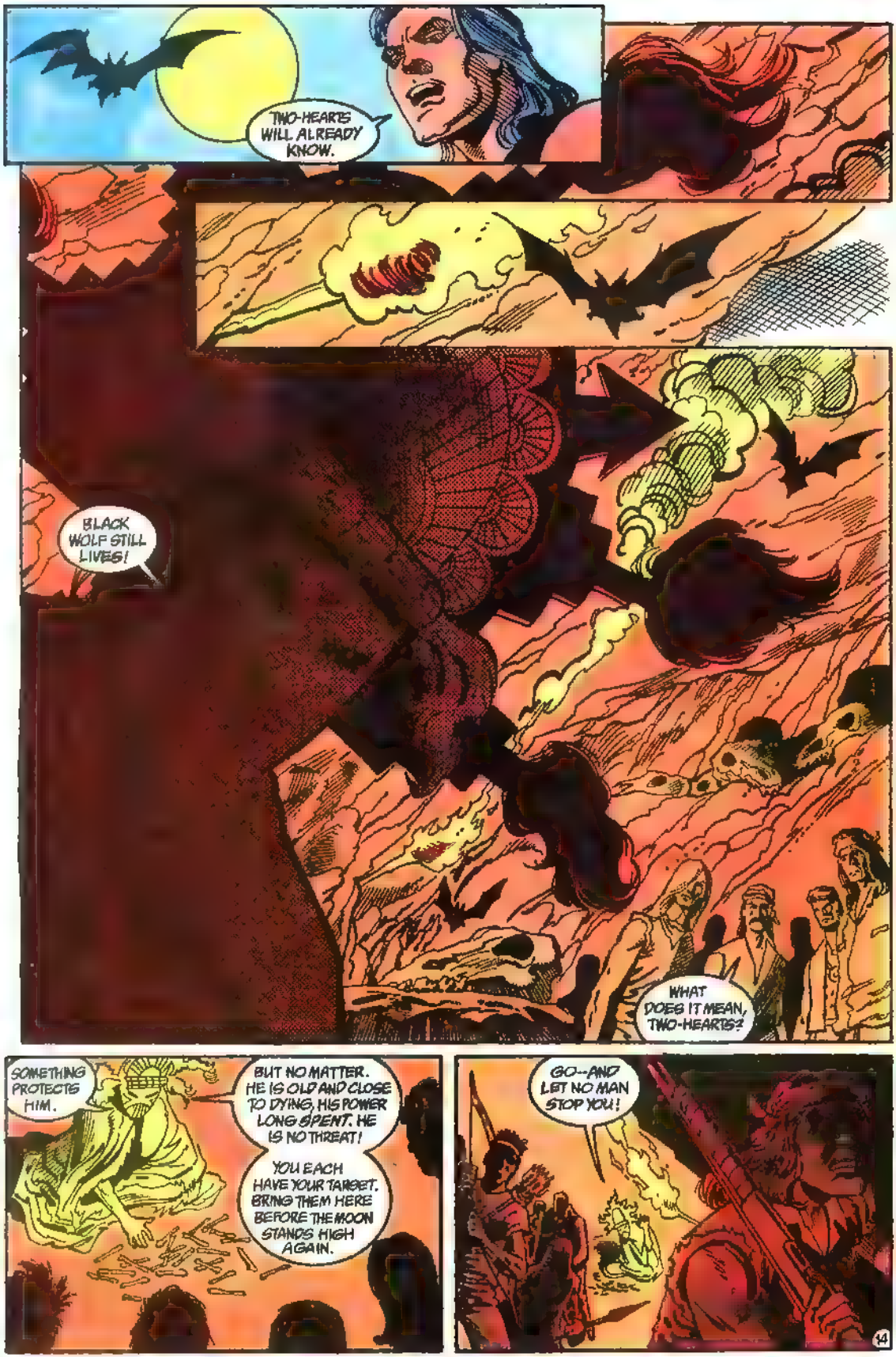

SHOK!
YIII YIII YIII YIII
BLAM!
DOG...?
NOT ALONE.
HE STOPPED MY CAR AND BROUGHT ME... TO HELP.
I GUESS.
IF DOG BROUGHT YOU, I AM IN NO DANGER. I WOULD KNOW THE ONE WHO SAVED ME.
MAY I...?
A MAN-- YET MASKED LIKE A BEAST... OR A DEMON!
GO AHEAD.
THE-- THE BAT!
MANITOU HAS SENT YOU! MY PRAYER MAY BE ANSWERED.
SIT. WE HAVE STORIES TO TELL!
9


MIDNIGHT, IN THE LEAST HOSPITABLE PLACE ON THE CONTINENT, AND I SIT TELLING AN OLD BLIND NAVAJO ABOUT MURDER AND ARSON, AND A PROPOSED MEET WITH "TWISTED BILLY" IN LAS VEGAS--
--AND HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT--
TWISTED BILLY? IT IS BAD. THEY MUST BE READY.
--EVEN IF I DON'T!
WHY? WHO IS HE?
TWO-HEARTS' MAN. TWO-HEARTS, THE MEDICINE MAN HE PLANS A... RITUAL, TO EXORCISE OUR CLAN OF THE EVIL THAT BEDEVILS US!
"IN 1863 OF THE WHITE MAN'S YEARS, THE CAVALRY OFFERED A PEACE TREATY TO THE WESTERN SHOSHONE. THEY CAME DOWN FROM THE HILLS, TO RUBY VALLEY--
"BUT WHERE THEY SOUGHT PEACE, THEY FOUND HATRED AND WORSE..."
HE'S THE HORSE THIEF! SEIZE HIM!

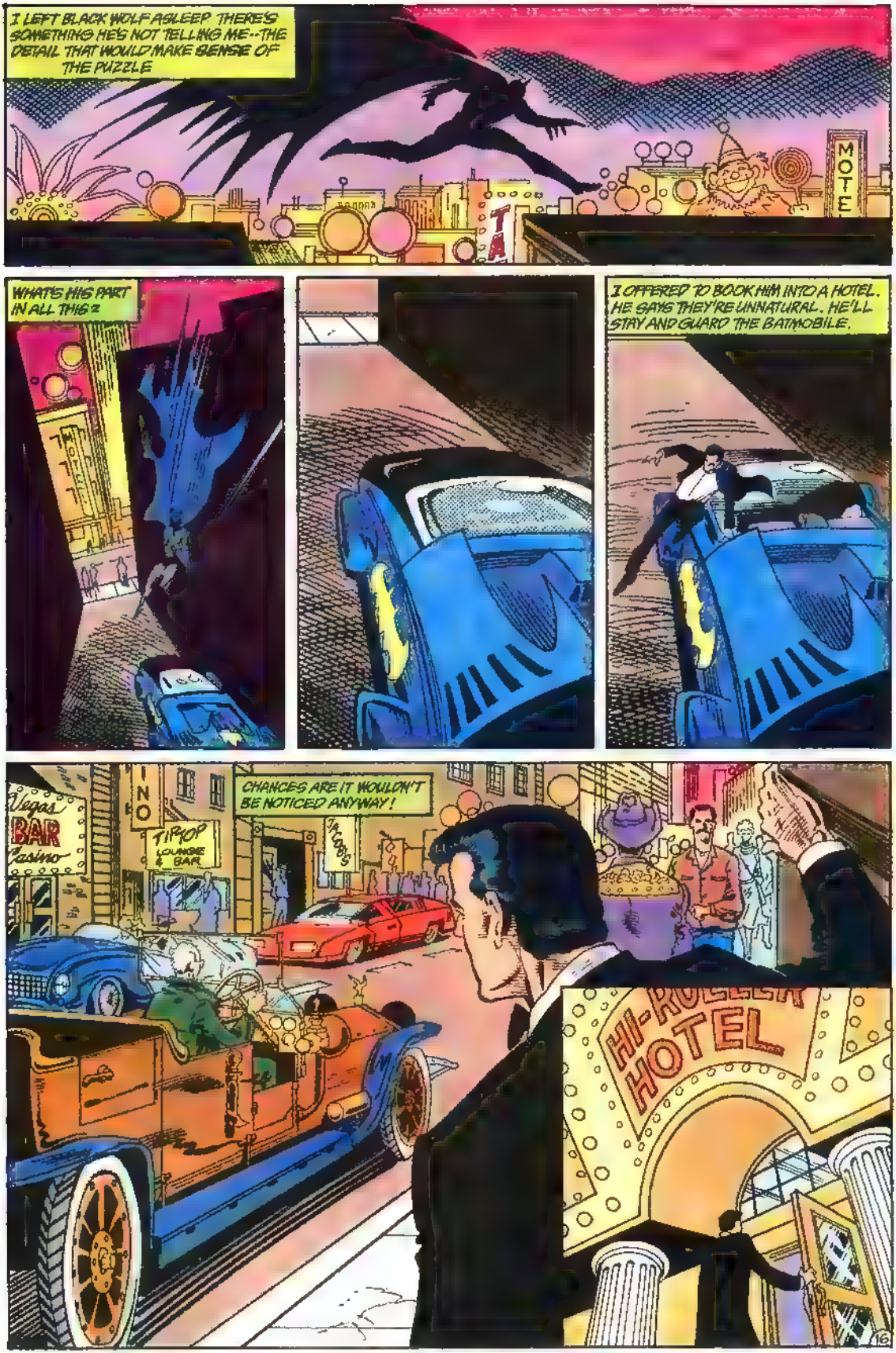
IF YOU SAVAGES WANT TO LIVE ALONGSIDE US, YOU BETTER LEARN OUR WAYS!
N-NO!
BLAM!
YOU LIVE BY OUR LAWS NOW!
"THE MAN WAS A NAVAJO, MARRIED INTO THE TRIBE. EXECUTING HIM WAS BETRAYAL ENOUGH--BUT WHAT HAPPENED NEXT... NO MAN WILL EVER KNOW WHY.
"THEY... BUTCHERED HIM--"
RIGHT--ONE AT A TIME!
"IT WAS BARBARIC--A BRUTAL ABUSE OF POWER--
"--THE KIND OF EVIL ONLY MAN CAN VISIT ON HIS BROTHERS--"
NOW THE BRAT.
PLEASE... NOT MY BABY!

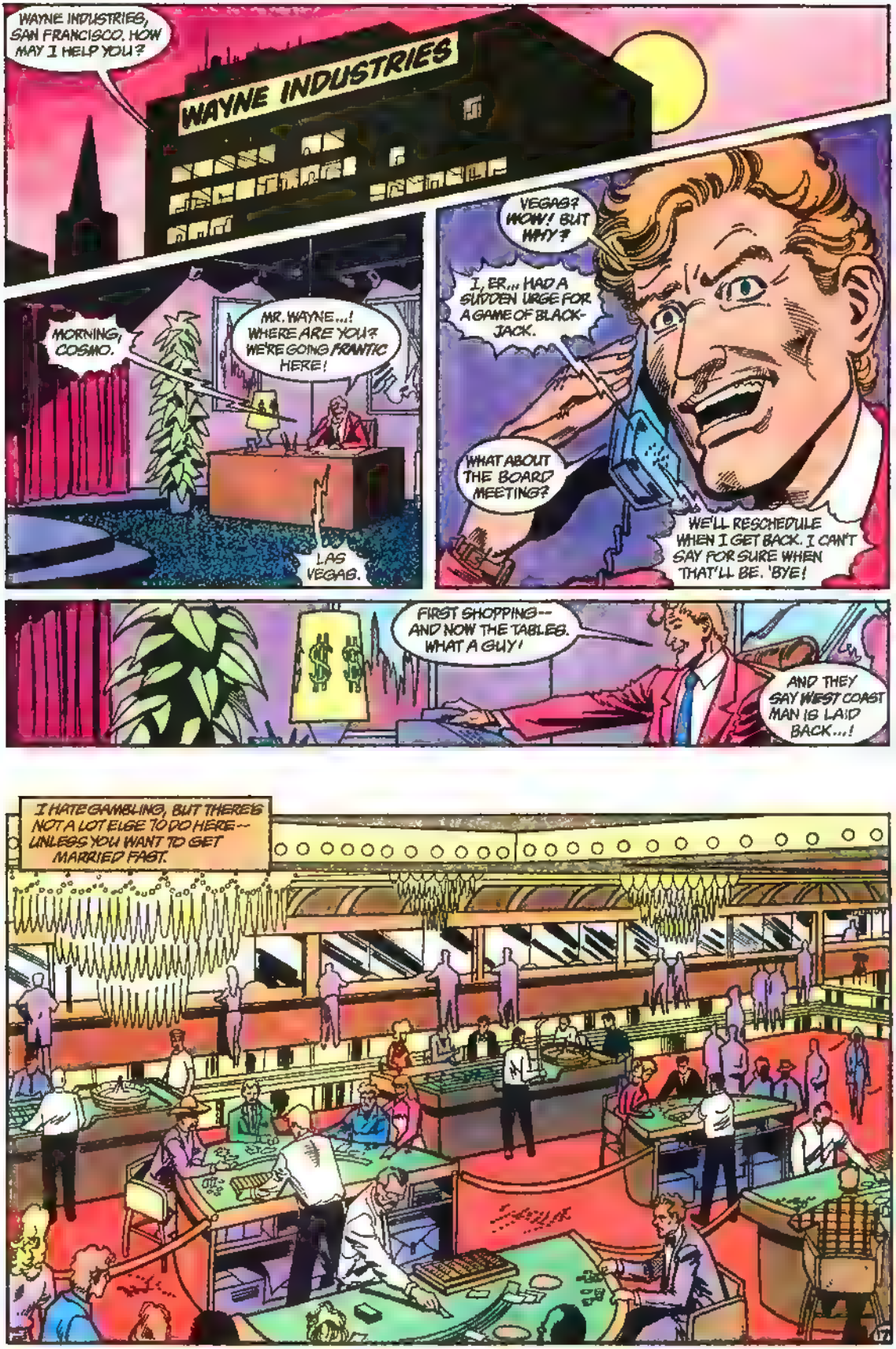
AND LIFE WENT ON. THE BOY GREW AND HAD A SON OF HIS OWN, AND HIS SON HAD A SON.
...AND THE GHOST OF THEIR DEAD FATHER LIVED ON IN EACH!
THE WORST TABOO OF ALL! PURE EVIL!
I... I'M SORRY. THERE WERE... MANY INJUSTICES AGAINST YOUR PEOPLE. PERHAPS ONE DAY--
IT WILL BE RIGHTED? YES--AND SOON! FOR TWO-HEARTS IS SHAMAN NOW, AND THE PEOPLE FOLLOW HIM. WHEN HE SAYS "KILL"-- THEY WILL KILL!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND-- HOW DOES THIS TIE IN WITH THE DEATHS IN GOTHAM AND SAN FRANCISCO?
THE TRIBE SPLIT UP. THE MEDICINE POUCH AND SACRED TABLET DISAPPEARED--AND TURNED UP IN THE HANDS OF WHITE COLLECTORS
NOW TWO-HEARTS HAS THEM BACK. HIS RITUAL CAN BEGIN.
WHAT RITUAL, EXACTLY?
THEY BROKE INTO THE CAVALRY MUSEUM. THEY STOLE THE OLD TROOP ROSTERS.
THEY KNOW THE NAMES OF THE SOLDIERS THAT DAY. THEY WILL TRACK DOWN THEIR KINFOLK...
GRRRRR
AND EXORCISE THE GHOST WITH WHITE MAN'S BLOOD!
12

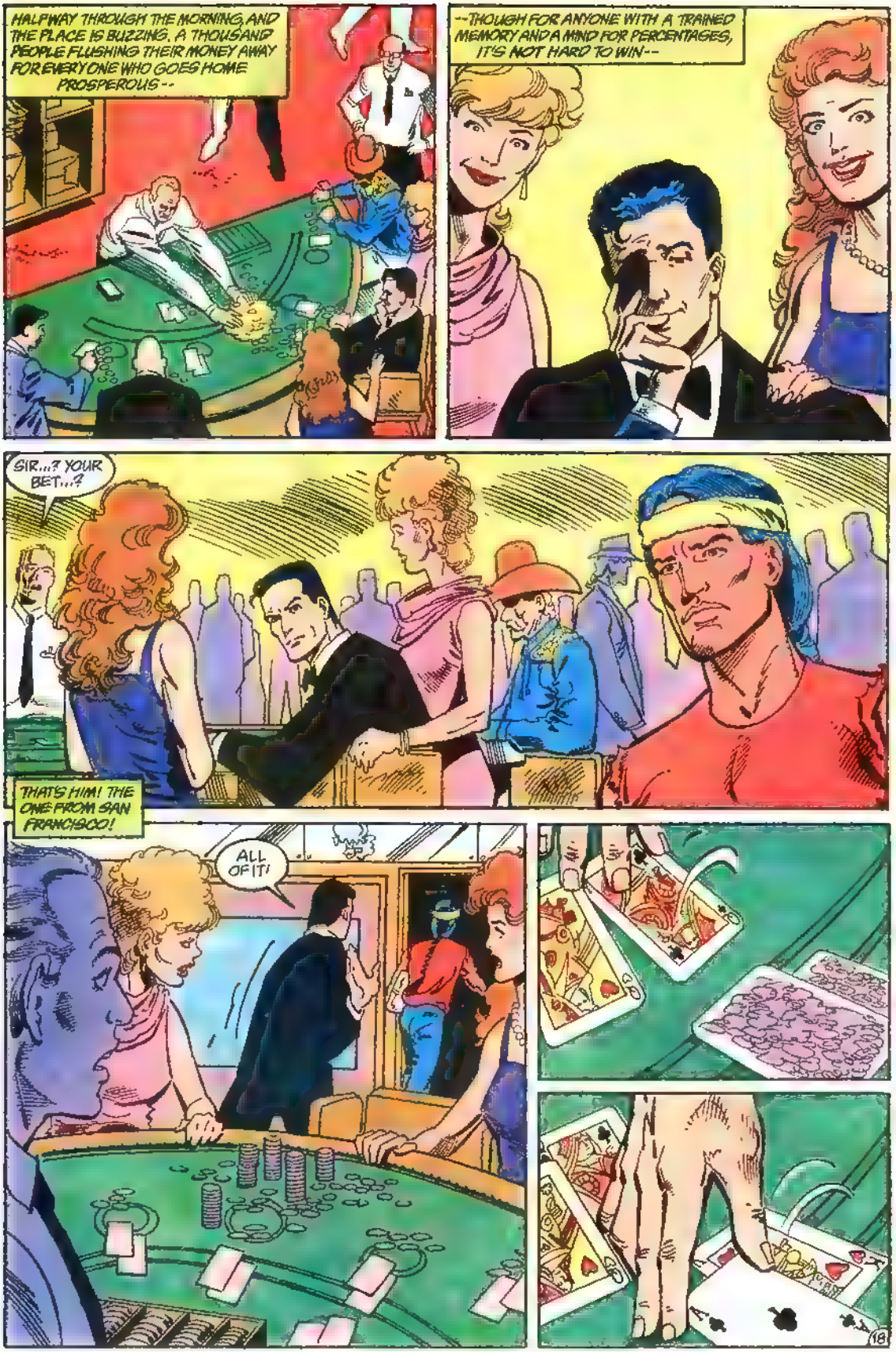
WHERE DO I FIND THIS TWO-HEARTS? MAYBE I CAN STOP HIM--
ONE OF THE ANCIENT PLACES-- THE PLACES OF POWER. BUT IT WOULD TAKE A MONTH TO SEARCH THEM ALL!
YOU SAID YOU HAVE A VEHICLE? IT WILL TAKE US TO TWISTED BILLY?
US? I HARDLY THINK YOU'RE FIT TO--
TWO-HEARTS IS POWERFUL BELIEVE ME-- YOU WILL NEED ME!
WHAT ABOUT THEM? THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU.
NOT THROUGH THEIR CHOICE LEAVE THEM
THEY CAN HIKE OUT IN THE MORNING.
TWO PROTECTORS-- AND ONE OF THEM THE BAT!
TRULY THE GREAT SPIRIT IS NOT FINISHED WITH ME YET!
VRRM
THEY GO AFTER BILLY! TWO-HEARTS MUST BE WARNED!
NO NEED


TWO-HEARTS WILL ALREADY KNOW.
BLACK WOLF STILL LIVES!
WHAT DOES IT MEAN, TWO-HEARTS?
SOMETHING PROTECTS HIM.
BUT NO MATTER. HE IS OLD AND CLOSE TO DYING, HIS POWER LONG SPENT. HE IS NO THREAT!
YOU EACH HAVE YOUR TARGET. BRING THEM HERE BEFORE THE MOON STANDS HIGH AGAIN.
GO--AND LET NO MAN STOP YOU!

AND AS FOR THE TRAITOR'S PROTECTOR--
SPLAT
LAS VEGAS--AN OBSCENE NEON SPRAWL GROWING LIKE A CANCER IN THE NEVADA SANDS.
HOTEL
NOT A CITY FOR A BATMAN. BUILDINGS TOO LOW--TOO FAR APART--CAN'T TELL IF IT'S DAY OR NIGHT. .
BUT THERE'S JUST A CHANCE I'LL SPOT THE NAVAJO WHO STOLE GIBBONS' TABLET, AND SHORT-CIRCUIT THIS WHOLE TWISTED BILLY ROUTINE.
Pelican Halton
CASIN
NO SUCH LUCK.
15


I LEFT BLACK WOLF ASLEEP. THERE'S SOMETHING HE'S NOT TELLING ME--THE DETAIL THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE OF THE PUZZLE
MOTEL
WHAT'S HIS PART IN ALL THIS?
I OFFERED TO BOOK HIM INTO A HOTEL. HE SAYS THEY'RE UNNATURAL. HE'LL STAY AND GUARD THE BATMOBILE.
CHANCES ARE IT WOULDN'T BE NOTICED ANYWAY!
Vegas
BAR
Casino
TIPTOP
LOUNGE & BAR
HI-ROLLER
HOTEL
12

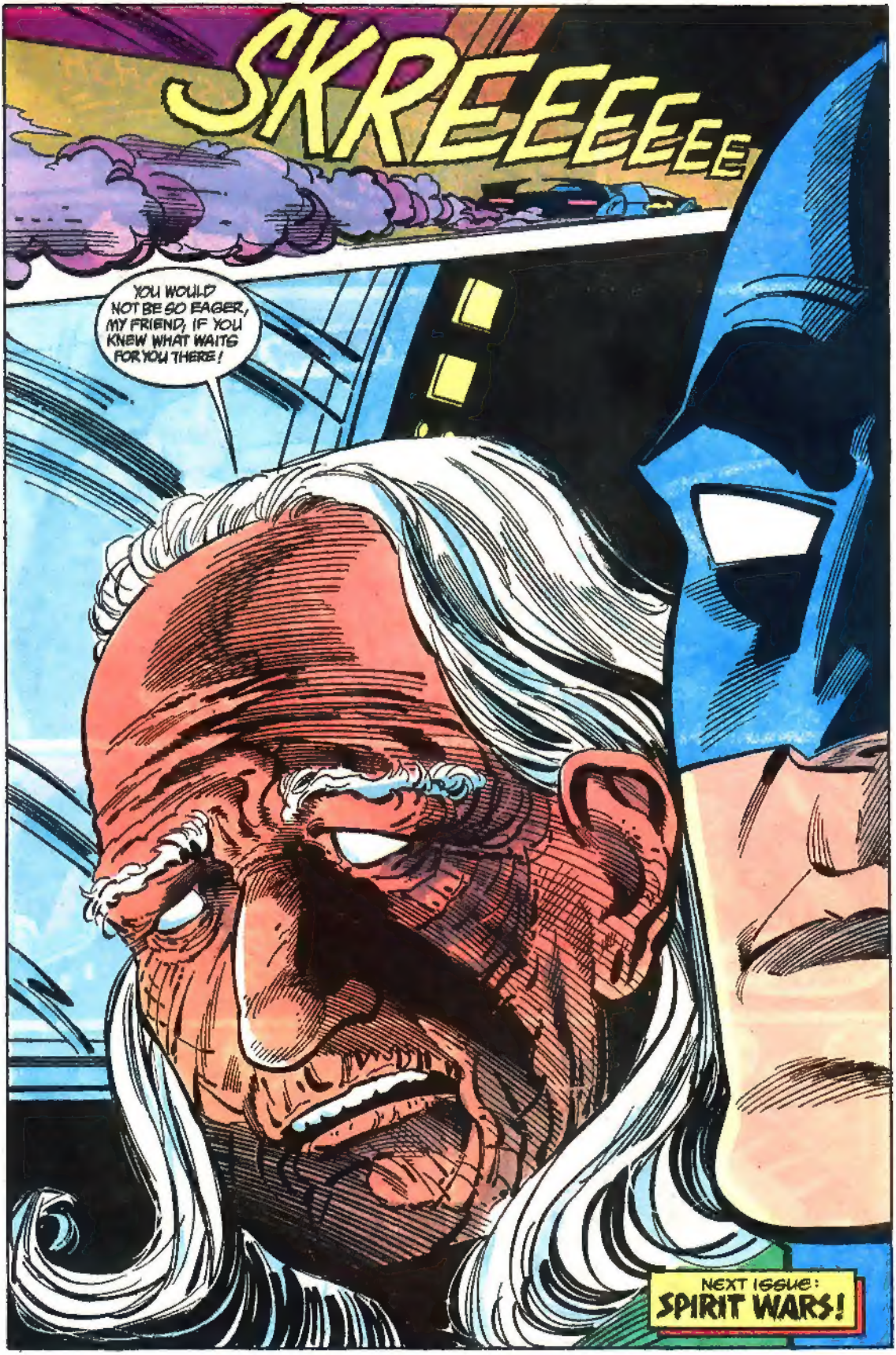

WAYNE INDUSTRIES, SAN FRANCISCO. HOW MAY I HELP YOU?
WAYNE INDUSTRIES
MORNING, COSMO.
MR. WAYNE...! WHERE ARE YOU? WE'RE GOING FRANTIC HERE!
LAS VEGAS.
VEGAS? WOW! BUT WHY?
I, ER... HAD A SUDDEN URGE FOR A GAME OF BLACK-JACK.
WHAT ABOUT THE BOARD MEETING?
WE'LL RESCHEDULE WHEN I GET BACK. I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE WHEN THAT'LL BE. 'BYE!
FIRST SHOPPING-- AND NOW THE TABLES. WHAT A GUY!
AND THEY SAY WEST COAST MAN IS LAID BACK...!
I HATE GAMBLING, BUT THERE'S NOT A LOT ELSE TO DO HERE-- UNLESS YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED FAST.


HALFWAY THROUGH THE MORNING, AND THE PLACE IS BUZZING. A THOUSAND PEOPLE FLUSHING THEIR MONEY AWAY FOR EVERY ONE WHO GOES HOME PROSPEROUS--
--THOUGH FOR ANYONE WITH A TRAINED MEMORY AND A MIND FOR PERCENTAGES, IT'S NOT HARD TO WIN--
SIR...? YOUR BET...?
THAT'S HIM! THE ONE FROM SAN FRANCISCO!
ALL OF IT!
18

I FEEL LIKE TAKING HIM NOW. WHATEVER BLACK WOLF SAYS ABOUT ONLY TAKING ORDERS, THE MAN'S A COLD-BLOODED KILLER--
--BUT I CAN WAIT--
--AND READ THEIR LIPS IN THE MIRROR.
THE SPIRIT BE WITH YOU.
AND YOU, BROTHER
THE POUCH?
IN MY TRUCK. THE TABLET?
RIGHT HERE
SOME VIGILANTE IN A COSTUME INTERFERED, LITTLE JOE AND COYOTE ARE DEAD!
IT'S THIS DAMNED CURSE--! EVERYTHING GOES WRONG!
BUT IT'LL BE OVER TONIGHT. TWO-HEARTS WILL FIX IT!

SIR! SIR!
NOT NOW!
EXIT
YOU WON, SIR. HERE--
SORRY. I'M IN A HURRY.
EXIT
EXIT
PUT IT IN THE CHARITY BOX!
BLAST! NO SIGN--
SLOT MACHINES
Casino
THERE--!
VEGAS HOTEL
FLK
20

SPNG
HOTEL
SHOWBOX
BEEP
BEEP
WSHSHSHSH
RRRGGG
HEY, WHAT IS THIS? IT'S ME!
YOU—BUT NOT YOU. DOG IS SUSPICIOUS, THAT'S ALL.
EASY. IT'S ALL RIGHT.
YOU FOUND THEM?
THEY'RE MOVING OUT ALREADY.
HEADED SOUTH-EAST.
SPAP
LET'S GO!
21


SKREEEEEE
YOU WOULD NOT BE SO EAGER, MY FRIEND, IF YOU KNEW WHAT WAITS FOR YOU THERE!
NEXT ISSUE: SPIRIT WARS!

DC COMICS INC.
666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103

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Before we tackle the flood of mail for #457, let's look at a few letters on #456.

Dear Signalers,

"A Mr. Marcuse—runs a fur business over on Deere Street. Upright, respectable citizen."

"Up till tonight, so was Santa Claus!"

Bwah-ha-ha-ha!

The line of the year!

Chris Connelly
7008 Appoline
Dearborn, MI 48126

* * * * *

Dear Denny, Kelley, and KC,

You guys really are succeeding with Tim Drake. I didn't believe it was possible, but here we are anyway. Seeing him rush off to aid Batman at the end of issue #456, I know that he is not going as Robin—and that makes a big difference. Too often in the past have we seen the story where Batman forbids his Robin to help, only to have Robin save Bats's life. This time it is Tim Drake rushing to the rescue, without the tights, and for some reason, I can believe it.

What I can't believe is that I'm actually writing to BATMAN and asking you to keep up the good work with Robin...and have him continue as a major part of the continuity. I was determined that after Jason, I wasn't going to like Tim. Darn it.

As for the Scarecrow, all I can say is 'Heehohahoheeehaaaaa!' Or words to that effect.

Rock and Roll.

Rol Hirst
Rushgrove Farm
Holt Head, Slaithwaite
Huddersfield, W. Yorks HD7 5TY
ENGLAND

* * * * *

Dear Denny,

I think I'm beginning to really like this Tim Drake. You guys are giving him the patience and smarts it's going to take to become Robin. Although I am looking forward to his appearance as Robin, I'll miss the true solo action Batman has had the past year or so. The scene of Tim calling Gordon was thoroughly enjoyable.

Just to let you know how good this story is, I had forgotten the Scarecrow was appearing in BATMAN. His laughing form on the last page had me open my mouth in surprise!

Sir Jon Johnson
64 Indian Hill Avenue
Portland, CT 06480

What had me open my mouth in surprise was the incredible amount of mail we received in response to issue #457. I'm talking piles and piles. And it was all positive! Let's get to some of the letters...

* * * * *

Batmen,

As far as the new Robin goes, I just want to know one thing: When can I vote to kill *this* one off?

Oh sure, the new uniform is cool and everything, but I think he'd look better in a bodybag.

Anti-Robin-ly yours,
Rob Hotchkin
4526 Washington Blvd. Apt. #22
Indianapolis, IN 46205

Well, OK. Almost all of it was positive.

* * * * *

Dear Batsignals,

Robin's new costume is cool, awesome, studly, radical, exciting, dangerous, pretty, beautiful, good-looking, sightly, fair, handsome, ravishing, dynamic, interesting, great, fantastic, extraordinary, perfect, ideal, complete, good, nice, terrific, incredible, excellent, best, marvelous, and breathtaking.

Sincerely,
Jared Knapp
306 N. Davis
Keota, Iowa 52248

P.S. Did I mention that I thought it was pretty darn neat?

Yes, Jared, but did you like it?

* * * * *

Dear Denny and Crew,

Yesterday I picked up the long awaited BATMAN #457. In the car on the way home I couldn't wait. I took out the book and began to read. To be perfectly honest, by the time I finished reading, I had tears forming in my eyes. I felt the same way after reading 'TEC #613. A tear journeyed down my face, past my smiling lips, and dripped off my chin.

The "Identity Crisis" storyline was superb! Alan's scripts get better by each issue. Alan Grant is one of my favorite writers, and I very much enjoy his work on THE DEMON and the LOBO miniseries.

And then there is the art. I can't put Norm's art into a complete thought. Here are a few descriptive words: abstract, amazing, dominative, and perfect. Norm is my favorite artist. His style keeps the reader awake and impressed. It's very hard for me to picture BATMAN or 'TEC without the art of Norm Breyfogle. Being of the age of thirteen I have my entire future ahead of me, and I have already decided what I will be. I am a fairly good writer and a good artist. In the future I plan to bring enjoyment and happiness to readers as you guys are doing now.

Oh, yeah. I almost forgot. A couple of nights back I was watching television and a man was being interviewed. His name was flashed onto the screen underneath him and it read: Dennis O'Neil. The interview was about Tim Drake/Robin III. They showed a couple of pictures of the new Robin costume. I was impressed. I was even more impressed when I saw the last page of #457.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,
Pat Mulcrone
989 Woodlawn Avenue
Des Plaines, IL 60016

I'm sure Norm and Alan will be pleased to learn that they're such inspirations to you, Pat. Thanks for the letter.

* * * * *

Hey, Denny—

BATMAN #457 was excellent.

Alan did a great job both on and with the Scarecrow. And I was quite impressed with his treatment of Tim Drake. His progression from young adult to young crimefighter has been handled extremely well by everyone involved with the project thus far, and I have complete faith that things will remain at this current level of quality.

And the new costume looks great. I just hope there's some Kevlar in it somewhere. Who came up with the design?

Later.

Uncle Elvis
17650 Dawson Road
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

Don't worry, Unc—there's plenty of Kevlar in it, not to mention "fluid-damped impact attenuation pads"! I'm not sure what it means, but it sounds impressive.

Tim Burton was a consultant in the selection of the costume, but the design was created by none other than Neal Adams.

* * * * *

Dear Denny, Kelley, Todd, Adrienne, Steve, Norm, and Alan—

Well, it's finally official. Tim Drake is Robin. I have to admit, I like Tim (much better than Jason) and I feel the idea of a new Robin costume is great and should've been thought of when Jason Todd was created (which should never have happened in the first place). The outfit is fantastic! I thought it would be a bit of a letdown after having already seen it on the Robin miniseries promo poster and on Entertainment Tonight (you're a TV star, Denny!) but that last page blew me away! Although I'm still against the idea of a "new" Robin and feel that Batman does not need a Robin (as you proved in the seventies, Denny, as did many others), I think the characterization of Tim Drake and the new costume will make all this easier to digest.

As for BATMAN #457, "Master of Fear," I can only say this: it was way past time to bring back the Scarecrow and what better time to do it than on Halloween! Jonathan Crane is the perfect villain for Grant and Breyfogle and, as much as I enjoyed the series, I have to admit I found the ending a bit anticlimactic. Oh, well, you'll do better next time, which better not be another four years from now!

Over all, "Identity Crisis" was a great series; the official introduction of the third Robin in his bitchin' new togs, the return of one of Batman's coolest enemies, and the creative team's usually good job. By the way, how come my copies of BATMAN #457 (all ten of them) read: "BATMAN 000" in the indicia on

page one? This ruins everything for me now! Oh, well. Keep on rockin'!

David Cullen
1188 Wellington Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3H 2Z8 CANADA

P.S. Re: From the Den. I love it! The more personal, the better. I wish all of the editors and creative staff had a personal column. Based on your achievements in comics alone, you're a great guy, Den, so don't eat any pancakes without telling us about it afterwards!

* * * * *

Dear Denny & Co.:

There was certainly nothing anticlimactic or subtle about the unveiling of the new Robin in BATMAN #457. The big surprise in this dramatic issue was not Tim Drake's arrival as a crimefighter, but rather Batman's emergence from his protective shell.

Always courageous and compassionate in protecting the masses, the Dark Knight is conversely cautious, overprotective, and sometimes callous in dealing with people who get close to him. In his short relationship with Tim through issue #456, Batman has tried to keep the young man at arm's length. Resisting Tim's eagerness to don the costume and adding to the burden of responsibility of filling Robin's shoes, I began to wonder if Batman could ever accept another partner.

But "Master of Fear" revealed the depth of the Dark Knight. In the freezing night with his breath forming clouds against the snow, Batman melted against his rigidly imposed rules and warmed to the young man who had risked all to save his life. "Thanks...Robin."

In the end Batman recognized even more than Tim the burdens of the old garb. And so he fashioned new raiment for his welcome new partner.

It was cleverly ironic that the villain in this story was the Scarecrow. This was a grand tale of two heroes conquering their fears.

Congratulations, DC, on establishing another important piece of history.

Jan C. Childress
82 Pierrepont Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

* * * * *

Dear Denny,

It's appropriate that I read the story of the "Master of Fear," with all its emphasis on masks, on Halloween. It's an occasion less celebrated on this side of the Atlantic—I'll always remember a wonderful night of costumed fun the year I spent October 31st in the company of a group of Americans—but if there was ever a comics character designed for today, it has to be the Scarecrow, master, indeed, of fear.

Meanwhile, BATMAN #457 will be remembered for other reasons, notably Tim Drake's first appearance in the Robin costume; the slight alterations made are neatly suited to the '90s. Despite many reservations on the part of many readers about introducing another Robin so soon after the loss of Jason Todd, it felt right when Tim stepped out. Also, I like the way he's come into the job and, in this particular issue, earned his spurs. Meanwhile, I loved the spiders on the cover—a fitting 'touché' to your rivals, given the captions on the covers of their latest bestseller.

Take care,
Malcolm Bourne
2&4 Bye Road
Shuttleworth, Ramsbottom
Bury, Lancashire BL0 0HH
ENGLAND

Mind you, I'm not saying that the reference was intentional, but I'm glad you enjoyed it all the same.

* * * * *

Dear Sir,

As a reader of Batman for more years than I care to remember, I thought I'd write about some of the recent developments and changes.

Since the 'Death in the Family' story we have all been watching as one Robin has replaced another. The introduction of Tim Drake through the 'Lonely Place of Dying' story was well done, but I did think his penetration of Batman's secret identity a little unlikely. After all, greater and more devious minds had attempted the same task, unsuccessfully, on many occasions in the past.

Once the new character was introduced to the DC Universe, a background was needed for him. He was very keen to join Batman but was a far more stable and level-headed boy than Jason Todd had been. To enable him to join with Batman, his family and background had first to be introduced and then much of it removed. It was not really enough that his parents worked abroad. Issues #618 620 of DETECTIVE COMICS seemed to achieve this aim. Enough loose ends were left by the story for future issues of BATMAN and DETECTIVE COMICS to dwell upon and expand.

I was impressed by the story from BATMAN #455-457. The Scarecrow has abilities and motivation well suited to battling Batman. We saw again the understandable reluctance of Bruce Wayne to take on a third young partner. (It may well have been more appropriate to leave Batman as a loner!) We also saw Tim Drake working hard, desperate to prove himself to Batman. Was there any doubt that he would save the day?

All in all, some interesting and well-written stories have led us from one Robin to the next and have left us with a new character with much potential. I look forward to the coming miniseries.

Maybe I'm a traditionalist, but I do not like the new Robin costume show at the end of BATMAN #457. In recent years DC has revived Flash and Wonder Woman and not felt the need to change their uniforms significantly. Perhaps Robin's costume was a little dated, but I think readers would prefer a uniform closer to the original. Perhaps another 'phone-call poll' is needed.

Yours faithfully,
Ed Davis
34 Westbury Park
Wootton Bassett, Wilts
ENGLAND

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Dear Denny,

Yay, yay, yay, yay, YAY!!! Tim Drake actually did something exciting! I, for one, was getting tired of having Tim sit in the Batcave and play with the computer. Do you realize that Tim made his first appearance exactly one year ago (as issue dates go)? Now he's finally settled into the role of Robin, and I couldn't be happier.

As for the new costume, well, I've got mixed feelings. It definitely differs from the older costume, what with the stylish new "R," the long pants (finally, long pants!), and the darker cape. All of this I like, but is it asking too much to tone down the upper half? Tim's really going to have to use the darker side of the cape to cover that red top with the yellow belt, or else hiding in the shadows is useless! Having a red costume alongside Batman's blue-and-gray will not help the Dynamic Duo surprise anyone, and I don't think anyone, least of all Gotham's criminals, finds a red costume scary or threatening.

Overall, BATMAN #457 was a pivotal issue in the Batman mythos. To sum it up, the Dynamic Duo has returned, better than ever before!

Now, if only Robin could lose the red...

Till next issue,
Jason Crase
3022 Huntington Drive
Arlington Heights, IL 60004

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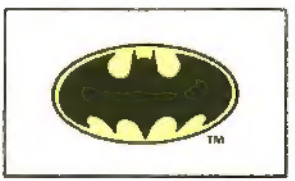
NEXT ISSUE: Dozens of innocent lives hang in the balance as Batman confronts the evil Two-Hearts! From this fateful encounter Batman will gain *a new partner* in his war against crime! Don't miss the conclusion of "Spirit of the Beast" by Grant, Breyfogle, and Mitchell.

—Kelley Puckett
Assistants Anonymous



From the Den

That night, I met Melissa Schwartz and Ric Meyer at Sam's, my favorite midtown restaurant. The food was good, the company affable and the conversation productive. We were discussing a science-fiction project and we got a lot accomplished. Two hours later, I said goodbye to Melissa and Ric and decided to shed some calories by hiking the three miles down to the Village and catching a Brooklyn train from there.

Traffic was sparse. Third avenue was more like a street in a small midwestern city than a major Manhattan thoroughfare. Just south of Fortieth, I passed a couple of homeless men squatting outside a supermarket and overheard a few words of their conversation; they were talking about how bombs are dropped. Then I remembered what I guess I'd been trying to forget all evening; it was January 15th, and we were beginning a war.

I know, I know. Humankind has survived hundreds of wars. I've lived through three, and I even wore a uniform for part of the last one. But I also know that everyone always survives everything—until the day when they don't.

I was glad I'd been discussing science fiction earlier. Science fiction assumes the existence of a future, and such an assumption is a small act of faith. It isn't much, but in times of dread, it is better than nothing.

Denny